

REMARKS

Claims 1-30 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 4-7, and 9-17 have been previously withdrawn from consideration. This paper is responsive to the Office Action of October 16, 2008.

The Applicant appreciates the Examiner's withdrawal of the finality of the previous Office Action. At paragraph 4 of the pending Office Action, the Examiner rejects claims 2, 3, 8, 18, 23-25 and 26 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Lu in view of Hickey. The Applicant traverses this rejection. Neither Lu nor Hickey, alone or in combination, teaches or suggests all of the limitations of claim 18.

First, Hickey is inconsistent with Lu because Hickey requires approvers to have access to a common electronic mail box (see Hickey paragraph [0016], "The electronic communications reside in electronic mailbox that is accessible by members of the group."). The crux of the Hickey system is this common mail box (see Hickey paragraph [0009], "Accordingly, it is an object of the invention to provide a group electronic mailbox for multiple members or users of a group to work collaboratively with received electronic communications. Since claim 18 requires routing of the electronic message (that is intended for the first user) to the at least two approvers, the approvers are necessarily not accessing a common electronic mail box as taught by Hickey. The approvers recited in claim 18 therefore cannot be notified of a change of status through a common mail box as Hickey teaches. While the Applicant maintains that the indicator of whether the message has been approved by another approver can be conveyed in a number of ways, the embodiment recited by claim 18 necessarily excludes doing so by accessing a common electronic mail box, because of the routing limitation set forth above.

Further, the Applicant submits that neither Lu nor Hickey teaches or suggests the limitation, "determining whether the electronic message is approved or rejected by applying a predetermined policy toward approval or rejection actions by the at least one of the approvers presented with the electronic message". The Examiner points to Lu paragraph [0023] as teaching this limitation.

However, this paragraph of Lu describes automatic screening. Lu presents the screening system using lists of approved or blocked senders as an example of such automatic screening. But this automatic screening is not performed according to a predetermined policy by the at least one of the [human] approvers, as required by claim 18.

For at least the reasons set forth above, neither Lu nor Hickey teach or suggest all of the limitations of claim 18, so claim 18 should be allowable. Since claims 2, 3 and 19-25 depend from allowable claim 18, those claims should also be allowable.

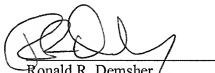
The arguments set forth above for claim 18 also apply to independent claim 26. For at least those reasons, neither Lu nor Hickey teach or suggest all of the limitations of claim 26. Since claims 8 and 27-30 depend from allowable claim 26, those claims should also be allowable.

In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 08-0219, under Order No. 0113715.00134US1 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: January 16, 2009



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